

# MEMO to MAILERS

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE  
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MARCH 2000

PLANET CODES  
contain



a **world**  
of INFORMATION

**"Confirm is so  
powerful that it  
changes how we  
think about mail."**

Bob Rosser  
Director of New Business  
Development  
Experian Marketing  
Solutions

**W**hat if you knew when a customer responded to your offer even before the reply letter was back in your hands? Or had information that told you when specific outgoing letters were about to be delivered to specific customers?

You can get that information—and the many benefits that come from knowing it—with Confirm, an electronic tracking system for letter-sized mail now being tested by the Postal Service.

According to Paul Bakshi, USPS Confirm program manager, participants place a second barcode on their letter-sized mail, called a PLANET™ code, that identifies the sender. When Postal Service sorting equipment reads the PLANET code—along with the more commonly

continued on page 3

## WHAT'S INSIDE:

- 2** POSTAL RENAISSANCE
- 4** UNITED PARCEL MISINFORMS
- 4** KEEPING POSTED
- 5** SELECT YOUR SAVINGS
- 8** LATEST ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS

## new Revenue Collection policy stresses future, not past

**T**he Postal Service will no longer attempt to collect back postage payments after mail is accepted, unless the mailer had prior notification of the problem or if intentional misconduct is found.

According to Richard Porras, chief financial officer and executive vice president, acceptance personnel will notify mailers the first time they have a preparation problem that should have resulted in higher postage. However, "after notice is given and identified problems continue to occur, deficiencies will be assessed."

**"We're dedicated  
to working with  
our mailing  
partners to  
resolve issues  
as they arise."**

Richard Porras  
Chief Financial Officer and  
Executive Vice President

The new policy goes into effect immediately, said Porras, and is the result of cooperative efforts between mailers and the Postal Service.

"We're dedicated to working with our mailing partners to resolve issues as they arise, and this will be the primary focus of our revenue assurance reviews in the future," said Porras.

continued on page 2

# POSTAL RENAISSANCE



**Medieval Mayhem owners Kevin and Robyn Flynn say the Postal Service is user friendly for both eCommerce buyers and sellers.**

## benefits feudal firm

**“Medieval Mayhem is an eCommerce success story.”**

April Cosgrove  
Long Island District Business  
Customer Relations Manager

Once upon a time, a shoppe called Medieval Mayhem peddled swords and lances, armor and goblets, and other renaissance wares. And business was good.

When they decided to go forth via the Internet, they sought a fleet-footed messenger to take their products to the far reaches of the globe. But their delivery company plagued them.

Fast forward to today. Medieval Mayhem now uses Priority Mail for domestic shipping and Global Priority for international mail. “Priority Mail has really helped our business,” said Kevin Flynn, who co-owns the Lake Ronkonkoma, NY, company with his wife, Robyn. “Our customers want Priority Mail because it’s less expensive,” he said.

The Flynns use Delivery Confirmation, too. “For the price, it can’t be beat,” said Kevin.

They access the Priority Mail web site ([www.uspsprioritymail.com](http://www.uspsprioritymail.com)) to download delivery confirmation information and rate calculations. Plus, they use PC postage, which lets them print postage on their own computers.

“Medieval Mayhem is an eCommerce success story,” said Long Island District Business Customer Relations Manager April Cosgrove. “They use the Postal Service for low-cost but high-performance shipping needs.”

So the next time a customer “serfs” the web for a gauntlet or a gargoyle, Medieval Mayhem can come to the rescue. And so will Priority Mail. ■

*Contributed by Paul Feldman*

## REVENUE POLICY continued from page 1

Joe Schick, director of Postal Affairs, Quad/Graphics, and chairman of the Mailers Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC), said the mailing industry is “pleased with the results. Now we need to see it put into practice,” he added, saying that field personnel will be key to the change.

“If someone is intentionally defrauding the Postal Service, we want them out of business because they give all mailers a bad name and drive up costs,” said Schick. “But when people make honest mistakes—especially considering the complexity of mailing requirements—we want it handled in a fair manner.”

Porras said the goal is to have quality problems resolved at the point of entry or soon thereafter. “Most problems arise from policy, training or communication issues, and we will place added emphasis on each of these areas.”

For example, the Postal Service will provide mailers feedback on mail quality trends as they arise. To help ensure standardized mail acceptance criteria, training will be made available to both postal personnel and the mailing community.

“These new policies should also significantly decrease the need for an appeals process,” said Porras. But the appeals process will remain available so mailers have an avenue to address classification concerns or the size of a deficiency.

Appeals already in the system will be treated in the same spirit, said Porras. ■

## PLANET CODES

continued from page 1

used POSTNET code that identifies the recipient—the exact date, place and time a specific letter was processed can be electronically transmitted to the sender.

“Armed with these facts, mailers have an enormous competitive edge,” said Bakshi. For example, they’ll know exactly when customer orders are about to be delivered and can staff accordingly. They can avoid the expense of a dunning notice that was about to go out to a customer who actually *did* put the check in the mail. They can get a head start on shipping time-sensitive orders, and more.

“The information you get with Confirm can make mailrooms more efficient and therefore more profitable,” said Bakshi. “The more companies think about it, the more advantages they find,” he said, adding that isolated testing of Confirm for flats is also under way and should be expanded nationally by late spring of this year.

Companies testing Confirm are extremely enthusiastic. “Confirm is so powerful that it changes how we think about mail,” said Bob Rosser, director of New Business Development for Experian, an information solutions company with marketing and consumer credit divisions. “We used to hand over the mail and then not hear about it again until we got a response back from the customer. But Confirm is like getting time in a bottle. Because if I know who is responding to my client’s direct mail campaign, and how, guess what? We can start on the next finely-tuned campaign, instead of waiting for the actual response pieces from the first one to arrive.”

Once Confirm is fully up and running with letter and flat na-

tionwide coverage, says Rosser, he also anticipates that Experian’s own call center will reduce the length of incoming calls.

“When employees can quickly access relevant tracking information about customer-requested documents, research time should decrease,” said Rosser, adding that “savvy customers expect this type of information. Having it helps cool down anxious customers, too, which makes employees’ jobs less stressful and should help reduce turnover.

“And it will certainly assist with customer perception,” he said, “because any time you can quickly provide such relevant facts people realize ‘These guys have their act together.’”

Bakshi added that the Postal Service is planning to have the full infrastructure in place to support Confirm for letter mail later this year. Application forms are not yet interactive but can be downloaded and printed from [www.planetcodes.com](http://www.planetcodes.com). You can also get information by calling 1-800-238-3150, or from your regular Postal Service contact. ■

## NEW POSTAL PRODUCTS are an invitation to innovation

Innovative companies often come up with ways to market postal products to other mailers who don’t have the time, resources or expertise to implement them themselves. And so it is with Confirm.

One company eager to offer its own Confirm experience and technology is Experian, which recently launched ePIN+<sup>SM</sup> or Experian Postal Information Network Plus.

“ePIN+ harnesses the power of Confirm,” says Experian’s Bob Rosser. “It will help mailers synchronize their hard-copy mail activities with the eCommerce speed we are used to today. We think a lot of companies will want to take advantage of the cost savings and revenue-generating opportunities it offers.”

With ePIN+ Experian can handle some—or all—of the tasks that help a mailer benefit from Confirm, from assigning and printing PLANET codes to collecting and even interpreting the data.

“We’ll provide information companies can act on,” said Rosser. ■

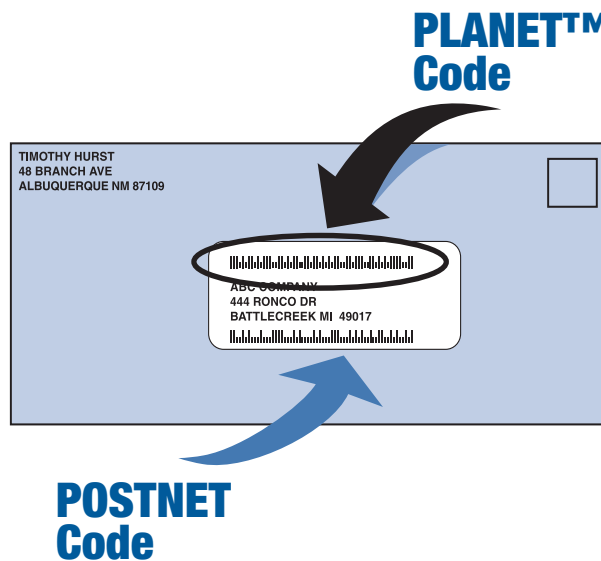
## THE PLANET BARCODE

Like the POSTNET codes mailers have become used to seeing and using, PLANET codes use a series of long and short lines to represent numbers. But PLANET codes are the inverse of the regular POSTNET code. That is, they use long lines where the POSTNET uses short ones and visa versa.

The same technology is used to apply both.

PLANET codes can be placed anywhere in the address block read area of the front of the envelope.

Some trivia: PLANET stands for Postal Alpha Numeric Encoding Technology. POSTNET stands for POSTal Numeric Encoding Technique. ■



This drawing illustrates just one example of where PLANET and POSTNET codes can be placed on an envelope.



## UNITED PARCEL SERVICE MISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN CONTINUES

United Parcel Service (UPS) is spreading more misinformation about the Postal Service in state legislatures.

The goal of UPS is to persuade each state to pass resolutions calling upon the U.S. Congress to strengthen the oversight authority of the Postal Rate Commission and to limit the Postal Service's ability to provide competitive products and services. In the process, it is spreading distorted and untrue information.

Last year, UPS lobbying efforts led to 24 state resolutions being introduced. Six states passed such measures. Already this year, nine UPS-sponsored resolutions attacking the Postal Service are active in state legislatures across the nation.

In Ohio, the Senate Committee on Insurance, Commerce, and Labor held a hearing on January 11 on Senate Concurrent Resolution 17. The Postal Service testified against this resolution, and no further action has been taken.

In Kentucky, home of a major UPS sorting hub, two

resolutions have been introduced. The House measure, House Concurrent Resolution 32, failed to pass at the Committee level after a January 25 hearing that included testimony from postal managers,

postmaster and supervisor organizations, and a major postal customer. The Senate version, however, moved forward. On February 2, the Committee on Economic Development, Tourism and Labor passed Senate Concurrent Resolution

24 by a majority vote and reported it to the full Senate for action.

"These state resolutions do not represent the widespread views of the customers of the Postal Service," said Deborah Willhite, Senior Vice President, Government Relations and Public Policy. "Rather, they represent the exclusive interests of UPS. The resolutions are a back-handed attempt to influence the U.S. Congress to build a legislative box around the Postal Service so that it cannot serve its customers effectively and compete fairly in the marketplace." ■

**"These state resolutions do not represent the widespread views of the customers of the Postal Service."**

Deborah K. Willhite  
Senior Vice President  
Government Relations and  
Public Policy

## Keeping

# POSTED

### News from Postal Customer Councils

The PCC is an association of business mailers and postal officials who work together at the grassroots level to improve the effectiveness of the mailing industry. For more information contact your local postmaster or Postal Business Center.

- Ken Cowell, manager, Customer Relations Program Management, is the new National Postal Customer Council (PCC) Postal co-chair. Cowell replaces Pat McGee, USPS Manager of Business Accounts.
- Clay Clark, manager, Office Services of Rolls Royce in Indianapolis, joins the National PCC Advisory Committee. Clark replaces Lori Ware, supervisor, Project Support, Amway Corporation.
- The TriState Mail Expo will be held May 18 at the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence in conjunction with National PCC Day. The \$75 registration fee includes National PCC Day presentations, plus more than 20 workshops and 40 vendor exhibits. For registration and hotel information, call (800) 322-0377.
- The San Diego PCC will host a breakfast March 28 to discuss e-business and the role of the Postal Service. For more information contact Steve Hire, (619) 222-0535.
- The Akron/Canton PCC Annual Membership Meeting and Conference will be held March 23 at Stark State Technical College in Canton. Keynote speaker will be Ray Hexamer, president, WHBC Radio in Canton. For more information call (330) 996-9911 or (330) 677-7761.
- The Greater Seattle PCC annual forum is April 6. For more information contact industry co-chair Lyn Wyzenbeek at (425) 393-2048 or Seattle-area postmasters. ■

## NEW RULES GOVERN RELEASE of PO BOX INFORMATION

The Postal Service will no longer provide to the general public the business name, address or telephone number of a post office box holder who is using the box for doing or soliciting business with the public. The ruling also applies to those who have caller service, and continues to apply to those who receive mail

through a Commercial Mail Receiving Agent (CMRA).

The Postal Service will continue to provide this information to law enforcement and regulatory agencies upon written request, unless there is a court order of protection. If there is a court order of protection, the agencies must present a court order. ■

# SELECT your savings with PARCEL SELECT

**M**ore and more ground parcel shippers can get volume discounts of up to 25 percent, thanks to Parcel Select and a national network of package consolidators.

"A new class of zone-skipping rates went into effect in January 1999," said Larry Wood of Expedited Package Services. "With them came a new choice in ground delivery called Parcel Select, which lets shippers enter their packages at one of three levels, giving more control over delivery timeframes and greater work-sharing discounts. The deeper into our system the mail is entered, the greater the savings."

pick up, sort, transport and combine a company's packages with those of other companies, providing the advantages of zone skipping to middle-volume mailers.

One of the largest consolidators is CTC, based in Minneapolis. CTC has 18 distribution centers across the country where packages are scanned, processed and sorted, said Marketing Director Greg Jacobs.

When CTC started business in 1982, United Parcel Service provided their delivery to the home. "Now the Postal Service is more cost effective for final delivery," said Jacobs, adding that "CTC's winning points are our ability to track and trace

rect offers the reassurance of package tracking.

Paxis, a consolidator based in Jacksonville, FL, calls its track and trace service "Paxtrax.™"

"We can seamlessly integrate USPS delivery confirmation data into our system so that the customer is able to obtain information on end-to-end service," says Paxis Vice President of Business Development and Partnerships Mark Sikowitz.

"That means our customers have a record of exactly when Paxis got their packages, when those packages went to the Postal Service and when they reached the customers.

"We help package mailers and shippers do the work and capture the savings while providing outstanding customer service," said Sikowitz.

Parcel Select has other advantages as well. For example, said Wood, "the Postal Service has the largest, most cost-effective residential delivery network in the country, reaching 130 million-plus addresses, including post office boxes. There's no extra charge for residential delivery, and packages are delivered on Saturday, also at no extra charge." Parcel Select rates apply to all 50 U.S. states, plus Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands and military addresses. And, added Wood, "customers' mail is ultimately delivered by letter carriers who know the delivery preferences of customers."

How will the proposed rate change affect Parcel Select? "Regardless of the outcome of the proposed rate case," said Wood, "Parcel Select will still offer the customer one of the best values in the package industry."

To get more information about Parcel Select, or to be teamed up with a consolidator, call your local USPS Business Center. ■



**"Our clients benefit from convenient access to shipping data, decreased cycle times and, ultimately, reduced costs."**

Steve DeFilippis  
Vice President  
Sales and Marketing  
Parcel/Direct

Zone-skipping discounts have been available at Bulk Mail Centers (BMCs) for years. "But practically speaking, only the very largest shippers could participate because they had to have at least 50 packages going to each of the 21 BMCs across the country," said Wood. With Parcel Select, entry levels were expanded to include Sectional Center Facilities (SCFs), which are regional mail processing centers, and Destination Delivery Units (DDUs), which are neighborhood post offices.

While the rates for SCF and DDU entry are especially attractive, mailers still had to have a minimum number of packages and provide the logistics. Enter package consolidators—third party logistics providers—who

packages and to deliver them directly to thousands of neighborhood post offices."

Another consolidator is Parcel/Direct, of New Berlin, WI, a division of commercial printing giant Quad/Graphics. Parcel/Direct capitalizes on Quad/Graphics' distribution expertise to enter packages deep into the postal system and to pass the resulting time and cost savings on to its clients.

"We do more than consolidate packages; we expedite them," said Steve DeFilippis, vice president of Sales and Marketing. "Our clients benefit from convenient access to shipping data, decreased cycle times and, ultimately, reduced costs," DeFilippis said, adding that, like many consolidators, Parcel/Di-



## POSTAL FORUM IS MARCH 19-22

Last call to attend the Spring 2000 National Postal Forum, March 19-22 at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville, TN!

The program will feature:

### General Sessions

Scheduled topics include the influence of technology in today's marketplace and the ever increasing importance of minority consumer markets and how businesses are reaching them.

### Plenary Sessions

These allow a more in-depth look at where the Postal Service is headed in the 21st century.

### Business Sessions

All 150 business sessions have been lengthened to allow more time with speakers. As always, the most popular sessions will be repeated to make it easier for you to attend as many as possible.

### Exhibit Hall

The latest in industry technology, products and services.

Mail your completed registration form to National Postal Forum, 3998 Fair Ridge Drive Suite 300, Fairfax, VA 22033-2907. Or you can fax it to (703) 218-5020 or register online at [www.npf.org](http://www.npf.org). Questions? Call (703) 218-5015.

## WATCH FORUM SPEECHES "ON DEMAND"

"Video on Demand" of National Postal Forum keynote addresses, panel discussions and other general sessions will be offered for the first time with the spring 2000 National Postal Forum, March 19-22.

That means those who want to review what they heard and saw at the Forum—and those who could not attend—can watch about six hours of presentations on the Internet

([www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com)) at their own convenience.

Presentations will be available toward the end of the day on which they are given and will remain on the web site for 60 days.

## ONLINE PURCHASES TO TRIPLE IN 2000

A recent poll from ABCnews.com says that more than three times as many U.S. adults plan to purchase online in 2000 than did in 1999. Forty-four percent of U.S. adults intend to buy goods or services over the net this holiday season, in comparison with 13 percent who bought online during the holidays in 1999.

And according to a report by market research firm Insight Research, online catalog sales will account for more than two-thirds of consumer eCommerce spending this year. Insight Research concludes that online catalogs will produce \$13 billion in revenue in 2000, or 68 percent of the estimated \$19.2 billion total consumer eCommerce market. U.S. households, they say, will spend an average of \$815 each this year on catalogs online.

The report notes, however, that print catalogs are not being replaced by their online counterparts. Instead, their study says that a number of consumer catalog companies indicate their web sites promote distribution of their print catalogs.

## "SMART SOLUTIONS" WILL HELP CUSTOMERS

The Postal Service has launched a special program to tap employee knowledge and expertise about adding value to First-Class Mail, advertising mail and periodicals.

Called "Smart Solutions," it asks employees to submit tradi-

tional and non-traditional ideas to adapt, grow and promote core products. Ideas can include more efficient delivery methods, opportunities for value added enhancements, or other improvements. The program is part of the Postal Service's commitment to continue meeting the changing needs of our customers, and to the future of the core products.

In just the first few days of the program, which runs until March 10, nearly 800 ideas were submitted. Smart Solutions is an addition to the Postal Service's regular employee suggestion program.

## INTERNET RUMOR BOUNCES BACK

The Internet rumor-that-wouldn't-die-last-year finally did, but now has returned.

It's the one that claimed that "Congressman Tony Schnell" had introduced "Bill 602P," which, if passed, would let the Postal Service collect a five-cent surcharge on all e-mail messages sent over the Internet. The message went on to say that lawyers in Vienna, VA, were working without pay to prevent the legislation from becoming law.

While the story actually made it onto some media outlets, a quick visit to the House of Representatives web site to search House Bills would show that no Bill 602P existed. Checking a list of Representatives for Rep. Tony Schnell is fruitless too.

The hoax e-mail also claimed that Washingtonian magazine called the e-mail surcharge "a useful concept whose time has come," in its March 6 issue. Washingtonian Online, however, said, "We never wrote such an article or editorial. We do not have a March 6 issue.



The congressman quoted does not exist; the bill number does not exist; the law firm which supposedly wrote this e-mail does not exist...."

Finally, print and broadcast media and wire services picked up the real story—that this was a hoax—and disseminated it widely enough that the bogus story died out.

But now it's been resurrected. If anyone asks, tell them the real story: It's not true. If they want proof, they can check out the U.S. House of Representatives web site at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov). No such bill exists.

## SALES CHANGE GOOD FOR SERVICE

An internal organizational change will reinforce the already strong link between USPS customer service and operations.

A new group, called Sales, is under the leadership of Gail Sonnenberg, former vice president, Tactical Marketing and Sales Development, and now senior vice president, Sales. Ms. Sonnenberg and her team will report directly to Chief Operating Officer Clarence A. Lewis, thus building a stronger alliance between sales and operations.

The new organization combines the functions of Customer Relations, Account Management, National Accounts, the Business Service Network and Tactical Marketing and Sales.

"The people closest to the customer will remain the same, but they will have more support behind them," said Sonnenberg.

## NEW OPTION IN FLATS DELIVERY

Airborne Express and their processing partner QuickPak Inc. are teaming with the Postal Service to offer bulk shipments of flat mail.

Called "QuikMail," it works like this: Customers prepare, seal and address individual flat mail pieces, which are picked up by Airborne. Airborne verifies and corrects addresses if necessary, then barcodes the envelopes and delivers them to QuickPak's processing plant where they are sorted by ZIP Code and put into the mailstream.

## NATIONAL PCC DAY 2000 IS MAY 18

National Postal Customer Council (PCC) Day is scheduled for Thursday, May 18, 1-2 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time), at the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence.

The annual event will be simulcast so PCCs across the country can participate. It will recognize achievements of individual PCCs and feature remarks from Postmaster General William J. Henderson and other top postal officials.

## ELECTRIC DELIVERY VEHICLES WILL ARRIVE THIS FALL

Five hundred new electric USPS delivery vehicles will begin arriving at post offices this fall, with the majority going to California and the rest to the Washington, DC, area.

The Postal Service awarded the competitively bid contract—the largest single purchase of electric vehicles in U.S. history—to the Ford Motor company, and has an option of ordering up to 5,500 more.

"These vehicles demonstrate once again how the Postal Service delivers clean air along with the mail—and why shopping by mail is good for the environment," said Dennis Baca, manager, Environmental Management Policy.

The battery-powered vehicles can be driven approximately 50 pollution-free miles before recharging. They accelerate from 0-50 mph in 12.5 seconds, similar to their gasoline-powered counterparts, and cost the Postal Service no more than current delivery vehicles.

Deployment of the first 500 vehicles will result in an annual reduction in tailpipe emissions of nearly 143,000 pounds of carbon monoxide, 11,000 pounds of hydrocarbons and 16,000 pounds of nitrogen oxide.

The Postal Service has the nation's largest compressed natural gas delivery fleet with more than 7,500 vehicles and recently purchased 21,275 flexible fuel vehicles that can run on either gasoline or ethanol fuel.

## WHOOOPS

The Deceptive Mail Prevention and Enforcement Act recently signed into law by President Clinton does allow sweepstakes companies to mail facsimile checks and "government lookalike" documents. However, both must contain specified, clear and conspicuous disclaimers.

Information in the January issue of Memo to Mailers said otherwise.



## MEMO to MAILERS

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Change Service Requested

As the Postal Service responds to increased competition and the explosive growth of eCommerce, new products and services are developed. Sometimes it's hard to keep up. Here's a rundown of the latest ones, and a hint of what's to come.

## Products and services launched in 1999

### STAMPS ONLINE

Provides Internet access to stamps and stamp products via the StampsOnline.com web site. Customers can use credit cards to purchase philatelic products and receive the merchandise via Priority Mail. Click on [www.stampsonline.com](http://www.stampsonline.com)

### PC POSTAGE

Computerized postage that can be downloaded directly from the user's personal computer onto the mailpiece, producing indicia that include a digitally encoded two-dimensional barcode. E-Stamp, Stamps.com and Neopost's Simply Postage are the current authorized providers of this service. Click on [www.usps.com/ibip](http://www.usps.com/ibip).

### WWW.USPSPRIORITYMAIL.COM

Provides online access to Priority Mail products and ser-

## need USPS ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS?

Here's a list  
of the latest



vices, including shipping supplies, boxes, labels, pick-up scheduling, etc. Click on [www.prioritymail.com](http://www.prioritymail.com).

### RETURNS@EASE

Available on participating

online retailers' web sites. Customers download postage-paid, plain-paper Priority Mail labels using a PC and printer, which makes merchandise returns to participating e-tailers easier for consumers.

### DELIVERY CONFIRMATION

Enables customers to confirm delivery of Priority Mail and Standard B mail. Access it at [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com) (and click on "track/confirm").

## Products and services currently in testing for potential availability in 2000

### USPS ELECTRONIC POSTMARK

The Electronic Postmark (EPM) time stamp token provides protection for electronic files similar to the protections provided to First-Class Mail. The EPM token consists of a trusted time and date and uses digital technology to ensure message integrity after processing by the Postal Service.

### POST ECS

Post Electronic Courier Service is a global, Internet-based message delivery service that provides confidentiality, privacy and integrity to electronic messages. It offers an official electronic postmark, tracking and tracing, proof of delivery, sender and receiver authentication, account management and sender mailing list management. ■